

Bronson memory brings pain after seeing 'awful event'

The Dallas Morning News

After seeing the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Charles L. Bronson, 60, of Dallas, wrote the following letter to the newspaper:

Memory is a most blessed and wonderful thing, but when a world-shaking tragedy of such national and international significance and implications has been suddenly thrust upon us, deep within the recesses of the mind by looking with the eyes that horrible event, then memory leaves you incessantly and robs you of restful sleep.

Prance (Mrs. Bronson) and I were up witness to that awfulness and awful event from a distance of 50 or so yards.

That morning at breakfast, I told her of my plans that we would see the fulfillment of a dream harbored since boyhood — getting to see the president of the United States and his first lady, waving and smiling.

The newspaper Thursday had given a detailed map of the parade route and the timing of events from the moment the president landed until he was to depart. We decided to take plan B, leaving the house later, since Bronson had to take Alice (a daughter) church in Oak Cliff to meet a party so we were motoring to Bethany Okie, I

asked her to meet me at the Union Station parking lot at about 12:10 p.m. I left about five minutes before the noon hour and in about 15 minutes I met Prance and we parked in the car and walked down four blocks to that little park area at the foot of Elm, Main and Commerce streets.

If you will recall, Houston Street intersects Elm, Main and Commerce and also is parallel to the railroad tracks. Two triangles formed by the three streets with Houston Street at the base of the triangles and the triple rail road encircles marking the apes of the two triangles. Stone colonnades and a bandstand are on either side of the head of the two triangles in the park areas which slope down towards the triple underpass. On either side of Main Street in the park areas are these stone shamrocks, the highest of which is four and a half or five feet high and about two feet by five feet each on top.

We chose the one on the left (as viewed from those in the parade) as it was only afforded us a full view of Main Street down which the parade was to proceed. We had to take plan B, leaving the house later, since Bronson had to take Alice (a daughter) church in Oak Cliff to meet a party so we were motoring to Bethany Okie, I

less than a dozen people from the colonnade area on Elm Street down to the underpass which really gave us an unobstructed view of that point.

I expected that the route for the start of the parade would be our particular place in the parade route, but for one thing you would be downtown and couldn't see any part of the coverage until it was right in front of you and the other reason was that this spot was the best for the colonnades area where thousands upon thousands were jammed. So this area marked the end of the parade. And, indeed, "the end of the parade" took on a double meaning at that point.

Prance, who one of her bone climbing on top but it was worth it. She said she was going to have it as a souvenir of that day in history.

There was another couple that we saw from that vantage point with an umbrella of roses and an umbrella.

We only had 10 or 15 minutes to wait until they were in sight and I took one shot with my Leica and then used my movie camera as they approached and took a few more shots as they passed. Prance had been viewing through the binoculars and as the parade got to the corner she wanted me to take the

binoculars so I could get a good view of Jackie in her bright pink suit highlighted by a brilliant Texas sun. But I told her to keep watching through the binoculars while I took the pictures. I don't know how many I took with my Leica, three, four or at most five.

But I was taking one with my Leica as they were about halfway down to the underpass — and then it happened. The first impression was pain and heat. Fireworks. But immediately I heard the first shot ring out in rapid succession and a slight pause before the third shot rang out. My next thought was that the Secret Service men had no right fire at a firework. I was about to call for trouble. I meant to say that day in history.

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Then I looked and saw a few people lay flat on the ground just as the gun depression started for a split second and then that took off again. Prance "Let's get out of here before we get caught in some crowd." And we did. We heard someone say, "Oh, President Kennedy is dead."

As we hurried to the cars we tried to believe that that kind of lie that was said to absorb so much through his speech and that kind that was so capable of generating such a false place that it would not be the memory and you was snuffed out as easily as the flame of a candle is blown out. All because one man killed in his act selected in his diabolical plan of hate and greed.

Now we study the amounts and the

the associated you have two sets of the opposite extremes of society. Both were highly successful in carrying out their plan. But the one was spontaneous in what he desired in life and President Kennedy was not. The other was both had served of need. But the one had a heart of brass and our presidential heart of flesh. And you could go on and on pointing out their similarities and contrasts that are brought into every day view from this time.

Today you are all praying that God in his infinite wisdom, mercy and grace will comfort us through in these days of sorrow and unspeakable losses.

Lots of love,
Charles